

Changing Careers



Since the late 80's when layoffs and downsizing became a standard business practice, job stability and loyalty have become obsolete. In today's economy, job jumping has become the norm. What's more, research now shows that workers who stay with an employer get an average 4.2 percent raise each year, while people who change jobs (strategically) get an average 12.8% raise. Here's how to make the strategy work for you:

1. **Forget about playing it safe, and get comfortable with change and risk.** Planning to stay with a company for 10 or 20 years is now the risky strategy. Companies won't hesitate to lay you off, outsource your job or sell your division if they can make more money by doing it. Consider it part of your overall strategy to change jobs (or even careers) every so often.
2. **Be constantly on the lookout for your next job.** Keep your eyes and ears open and your antennae up for growing opportunities. Do your research on salary (aim for a 15% raise), benefits, commuting, and flexible hours or other work-life policies.
3. **Create your own plan.** Clearly define your objective. Keep a running list of projects you've worked on and find the common threads running through the list. This will help you identify your skills and other specifics you can offer a new employer. When you get an interview with a great company, plan how to present yourself. Plan how to show them what you can do for their company, and how. Be willing to relocate.
4. **Keep your skills and education up to date**—particularly in technology. Take classes, volunteer, or work part-time where you can learn new software or skills to stay current.
5. **Network like crazy.** Use your friends, family and professional contacts to help you learn about job openings coming up.
6. **Leave when things are good.** If you quit because you're not getting along with your boss or because of some other problem, you will be sabotaging yourself. Be a model employee up to the minute you leave. You want the best recommendation and reputation you can have when you leave a job. Stay in the job until you are hired for the new one.
7. **Think of yourself as a product and market yourself.** Put yourself in the employer's shoes and tailor your marketing efforts to that perspective. Go out and sell yourself—don't wait for opportunities to come to you.



By staying current, observant and comfortable with a certain amount of risk, you can use the instability of the job market to your advantage and better yourself with each strategic job move.